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New York

Chairman: Mr. Kiwanuka ..... (Uganda)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda items 57, 58 and 60 to 73 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Smith (Australia): Mr. Chairman, may I express the Australian delegation's congratulations on your appointment to the chairmanship of the Committee. We look forward to working closely with you over the coming weeks.

Few would disagree that the array of security challenges facing the world today highlights the need for strong international solidarity and resolve in dealing with threats. This forum is an important place to demonstrate our collective determination to strengthen international disarmament and non-proliferation norms and arrangements. We have a responsibility to ensure that the First Committee remains a relevant and dynamic body in addressing current and emerging challenges to international peace and security.

Australia has been heartened by the strong international response to global terrorism after the tragic events of September 2001. The horror of those attacks infused last year's First Committee with a more cooperative spirit. For its part, Australia continues to play an active role in international efforts to eradicate terrorism, the disturbing breadth and depth of which is becoming clearer over time. We must all maintain a high level of vigilance and a strong determination to address this grave threat.

We must also remain resolute in our collective determination to strengthen multilateral mechanisms to meet the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. We consider the continuing close engagement by Member States in multilateral processes to be of vital importance to promoting security objectives. Multilateral mechanisms raise the bar against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by establishing norms and facilitating verification of compliance and they complement plurilateral, regional and national non-proliferation efforts and arrangements.

We are all aware of Iraq's attempts over many years to circumvent international norms against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Australia considers that the international community cannot allow these violations to go unchecked and that firm action by the United Nations Security Council is required to rectify this situation. Getting inspectors back into Iraq, backed by a strong Security Council resolution providing for full and unfettered access to all sites, is just the first step. We must remember that our goal remains disarming Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction. Apart from addressing the threat to international security posed by Iraq, we must avoid creating a precedent that other would-be proliferators might be tempted to exploit.

The proliferation of nuclear weapons remains one of the most serious challenges to global security. The

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Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) serves as the cornerstone for global efforts seeking to curb the spread of such weapons and to work towards the goal of nuclear disarmament. Australia was particularly gratified by the recent announcement by Cuba that it would accede to the NPT, making an important step towards universalization. We take this opportunity to urge the three States that remain outside the Treaty to reconsider their position and to take steps towards NPT accession.

Australia welcomed the outcomes of the First Preparatory Committee meeting of the 2005 NPT Review Conference, which took place in April this year. While we see many challenges ahead in the 2005 review cycle, we take heart from positive developments. For example, the United States-Russian agreement on the Moscow Treaty is a tangible step towards the realization of NPT disarmament objectives.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a key element of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation framework. Australia is determined to continue to work actively to bring the Treaty into force. In this respect, I draw attention to the joint declaration that Australia, Japan and the Netherlands launched in New York last month in support of the CTBT. The declaration encouraged ongoing support for the development of the CTBT's verification machinery, adherence to the Treaty, and set out an action plan to expedite the entry into force of the Treaty. We encourage other United Nations Members to associate themselves with the declaration before it is submitted to the Secretary-General. With 166 signatories and 94 ratifiers, there should be no doubt that the CTBT represents widespread recognition of a powerful international norm against nuclear testing. In this regard, Australia is pleased that a voluntary moratorium on nuclear testing continues to hold. We strongly urge all nuclear-weapon and nuclear-weapon-capable States to continue to uphold that moratorium.

The universal implementation of the strengthened safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is another clear nuclear non-proliferation priority, and an area in which further headway can be made by the international community in the lead-up to the next NPT review conference. Achieving that objective would contribute significantly to a climate favourable to further cuts in nuclear arms. Australia is helping a number of regional countries with ratification and implementation of the Additional Protocols. Australia applauds the recent efforts made by the IAEA to counter the threat of nuclear terrorism through the work undertaken on the security and physical protection of nuclear material and facilities. Indeed, it was Australia's privilege over this past year to chair the Board of Governors of the IAEA and to be closely associated with these recent efforts. It is our firm view that, at this critical point in history, the momentum of the IAEA's work must be maintained to allow it to deliver continued security benefits to the entire international community. In particular, we make a plea that the Legal and Technical Group considering an amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, work constructively and expeditiously to achieve a consensus text which strengthens the Convention.

Australia invites all States to support fresh attempts to achieve a breakthrough on the commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). The negotiation of an FMCT is a priority disarmament and non-proliferation objective. It is disappointing that, despite repeated endorsement of proposals to negotiate an FMCT, after several years we are still no closer to the start of formal negotiations. We are encouraged that the Netherlands and other countries have undertaken informal discussions on FMCT issues. In the meantime, Australia and other cut-off treaty supporters call upon all relevant States to uphold moratoriums on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes.

Australia is strongly committed to preventing the spread of chemical and biological weapons. We were disappointed that efforts last year to conclude a protocol to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) proved unsuccessful and that the Fifth BWC Review Conference subsequently failed to agree on a forward programme. In light of these setbacks, it is vital that momentum towards strengthening the BWC is renewed at the resumed Review Conference in November. Australia urges all States to increase their efforts to achieve practical and effective international measures promoting effective implementation of the BWC.

We are pleased that the difficulties that hampered the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) have been resolved and that the OPCW is pursuing its objectives with renewed vigour. We reiterate our earlier calls for all States that

have not signed and ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) to do so as soon as possible to ensure its enhanced effectiveness through universal membership.

Preventing the proliferation of ballistic missiles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction is a key Australian priority. We welcome the Netherlands' invitation to host a conference from 25 to 26 November to adopt an international code of conduct against ballistic missile proliferation. The code represents an important practical step in addressing the problem of ballistic missile proliferation and building confidence at regional and global levels. It does not preclude further initiatives in the future. We urge all States to sign the code.

Australia is proud to be associated with several initiatives in the conventional arms control field that have delivered tangible benefits to the international community. In the area of small arms and light weapons, Australia has been active in promoting implementation of the 2001 United Nations Programme of Action in our region. We urge all States to continue efforts towards implementing the Programme of Action in the lead-up to the first biennial meeting of States scheduled for mid-2003.

The Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines continues to grow in strength with a total of 130 countries having ratified or signed the Convention. Australia calls on those States which have yet to accede to do so as soon as possible, and to refrain from using anti-personnel mines in the interim. We welcome Thailand's plans to host the meeting of States Parties next September. That will assist in raising the profile of landmine issues in the Asia-Pacific.

Australia was pleased with the positive outcomes achieved at the Second Review Conference of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects last December. Work this year at the experts' level has demonstrated the adverse humanitarian consequences of explosive remnants of war and we feel confident that States will agree to raise the tempo of consideration of explosive remnants of war next year.

In a fluid global strategic environment, we take this opportunity to highlight the need for all First Committee delegations this year to cultivate a similar level of cooperation to that evident at last year's session. We should not let our inevitable differences of view allow us to lose sight of our shared commitment to the preservation and enhancement of international security. In this forum we must be guided by the overarching goal of mobilizing international support for practical measures that seek to address the existing, as well as emerging, threats to security. We therefore again stand ready to work closely and constructively with you, Mr. Chairman, and with all delegations over the coming weeks to help to ensure a successful session.

Mr. González (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. Chairman, I should like to begin by congratulating you on your election to preside over the work of this important Committee. I wish you and the other members of the Bureau the greatest success and assure you that you can count on the cooperation and support of the delegation of the Dominican Republic. I should also like to express my country's support for the statement made on behalf of the Rio Group by the representative of Costa Rica.

The international panorama has been changing over these last decades. The premises on which security policies were developed have now been caught up in the desire to better manage the complex realities of the present. There is now a certain consensus that in many cases the major threats to the security of States do not come from military attacks against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of such States, but instead come from new and complex phenomena, such as drug trafficking, illicit weapons trafficking, terrorism and transnational crime by non-State actors. With regard to small island States, we could also add as threats to security, natural disasters, transport of nuclear waste and environmental degradation.

The problems of international peace and security are multiple and complex. Accordingly, we need a commitment from the international community as expressed in the United Nations that is more than merely something that is recorded each year. The Dominican Republic, as a country with a clear and expressed vocation for peace, supports efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament. In this context, my delegation wishes to express solidarity and, once again, its firm confidence in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We believe that the future of nuclear disarmament is

decisively linked to compliance with those two important commitments and international instruments. It is both timely and necessary to note the recent decision by Cuba to join the NPT and the eight further States that have decided to sign or ratify the CTBT.

Perverse and criminal terrorist acts as carried out on 11 September 2001 were and continue to be for my country's delegation a lamentable event against a vital human centre and an unjustifiable affront to a political and democratic system. We believe that those acts were indeed an affront to all those of us who share the same democratic principles, principles which we have worked so hard to achieve in some of our countries. That lamentable human tragedy should, however, encourage us to remain firm in the purposes and principles of preserving the moral values of democracy. We also need to ensure that our actions and responsibilities in the face of today's threats are in conformity with international law and the United Nations Charter.

The preservation of the Caribbean Sea is a subject which has, and continues to have, my country's priority attention. For far-off countries, the Caribbean may seem simply to be a seaway through which their big ships transport commodities from one ocean to another. For us the Caribbean Sea is our sea. It is our geopolitical space. It is fully and completely identified with our lives. Accordingly, for my country's delegation, the transport of radioactive waste through the Caribbean Sea constitutes a serious threat to security, to tourism, to marine life and to the environment of the whole region. Therefore, for my country's delegation, and in accordance with research by scientific and academic bodies, the existing design of transport vessels is inappropriate inasmuch as use is made of structurally weak materials. Moreover, emergency plans in the event of disasters are inadequate and insurance coverage in terms of liability is lacking.

Without doubt, all this constitutes a serious risk to Caribbean nations and to the other countries involved. Therefore, the Dominican Republic insists once again before the Committee that mechanisms should be applied to security measures and the transport of radioactive material and dangerous waste, as established by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO). We also appeal for the adoption of new rules to complement internationally recognized safety standards, particularly with regard to such issues as safeguards against the contamination of the marine environment, the exchange of information on routes, and the establishment of mechanisms, and effective liability rules in case of damage.

Although more than three decades have elapsed since the conclusion of the negotiations on the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco), we have over this period noted that the political and human phenomena that gave rise to the Treaty in our region were marked by the great capacity of our Governments to adapt to new developments. Amendments to the major articles, such as the Additional Protocols, are one example. This capacity to revise what has been negotiated, to make concessions and to update agreements in search of a common objective, has made it possible for the signing States to ratify the Treaty. We would also like to welcome Cuba as a State Party to the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

Another subject that is of importance to my delegation is control over the trafficking and possession of small weapons. These types of weapons have caused, and continue to cause, serious problems in Latin America and the Caribbean. According to reports from regional bodies, the direct and indirect costs of damage in our region caused by the use of small weapons, is about $1.7 billion per year, and the worst damage, is the death of 1,000 persons a day in the region. The Government of the Dominican Republic is making major efforts to deal with this by establishing strict controls on our borders and at our customs posts, strengthening supervision at such locations, training personnel, educating the population on the danger and liability of bearing weapons, and, in particular, trying to improve the living conditions of our people. All this has a direct influence on our activities to combat crime. We should emphasize the recent satellite operations carried out by the armed forces in different strategic areas of the Dominican Republic where we have seized thousands of illegal weapons held by the civilian population.

We are also preparing to submit to our country's National Congress a proposed amendment to the national law on the bearing of arms, the fundamental objective of which will be to establish severe penalties for those involved in the illegal trafficking of weapons. We shall thus seek to ensure that the amendment is a

legal framework within which we will find further solutions to current forms of such crime.

The reality of current events has made it possible for us to observe that peace does not mean just the absence of war. It also means the interdependence and cooperation of all to promote economic and social development, to control and limit weapons, to promote human rights, to strengthen democratic institutions, to protect the environment, and to improve everyone's living conditions by a fairer sharing of the wealth endowed by nature. All these are indispensable elements in establishing democratic and peaceful societies, and, in particular, safer societies.

Mr. Niang (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): Mr. Chairman, may I say how happy we are to see you presiding over the First Committee. There is no doubt that your solid experience in the realm of disarmament and your distinguished diplomatic qualities will contribute greatly to the success of our work. Permit me also to extend our profound gratitude to Under-Secretary-General Jayantha Dhanapala for his exemplary devotion to the cause of disarmament.

One year after the distressing events of 11 September 2001, terrorism, the plague of our era, has emerged as one of the most serious threats to world peace. In this regard the international community did the right thing by adopting, in a spirit of unity and concert, bold measures against this terrible evil. It is a good thing that the Committee has provided the necessary momentum by deciding last year to adopt a resolution condemning terrorism while highlighting the dangerous link between it, illicit arms trafficking, and the movement of weapons of mass destruction.

Aware of the gravity of this problem, which has claimed so many victims in Africa — and I am thinking particularly of the dastardly attacks in Tanzania and Kenya — and taking due account of the new context emerging from the tragic events of 11 September 2001, Senegal which, on 17 October 2001, hosted an African conference against terrorism, last year proposed to the African Union an additional Protocol to the Organization of African Unity Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism, adopted in 1999 in Algiers, the same city where an African plan of action against terrorism was recently concluded. That commitment of my country reflects our faith in multilateralism as the main road which will help us to make our voice heard more effectively in our struggle to eradicate the threats to international peace and security which flourish on the fertile soil of injustice, exclusion, poverty and underdevelopment.

That is why my delegation regrets the lack of meaningful progress in the realms of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation, at the very time when, thanks to the end of the East-West confrontation, the countries of the world should be taking every opportunity to build a world free from the spectre of collective annihilation.

It is too bad that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is far from having produced the effects provided for in the thirteen-point plan of action approved by the 2000 Review Conference. It is therefore urgent and imperative that the criteria for verification and irreversibility be strictly observed. Add to this the fact that the universality of the NPT must remain the highest priority. In this regard, I express my pleasure at the recent decision of Cuba to accede to the NPT and to ratify the Treaty of Tlatelolco. I should like to take this opportunity to call upon States that are not parties to this Treaty to join it as soon as possible.

In the absence of a reliable multilateral juridical regime in the realm of disarmament, bilateral agreements can contribute to the promotion of international security. My delegation therefore welcomes the agreement signed last May between the United States and the Russian Federation for a reduction of their strategic nuclear weapons. A great deal still remains to be done in order to banish this nuclear peril once and for all. That is why we must act quickly so that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) can enter into force as soon as possible. In this regard Senegal supports the initiative of 14 September last, launched by 18 States Parties to that Treaty, with a view to the signing or ratification of this instrument by countries that have not yet done so.

My delegation also feels that the happy initiative that led to the establishment in Central Asia of a nuclear-weapon-free zone should be followed in all parts of the world, following the Treaties of Rarotonga, Bangkok, Tlatelolco and of Pelindaba in Africa, dating from 1996. Furthermore, we should not overlook the challenge of the control of chemical and biological weapons. It is imperative, now that the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) has come into force, that

the organization dealing with the prohibition of these weapons should have the necessary resources to discharge its functions in verification and inspection. With regard to biological weapons, it is urgent that a protocol designed to strengthen the implementation of the Convention on that subject, should be concluded as soon as possible.

The promotion of international security cannot be boiled down merely to weapons of mass destruction, but should also apply to anti-personnel mines and small arms and light weapons, which sow death and destruction in so many developing countries, particularly in Africa. On anti-personnel mines, my delegation wishes to express its satisfaction at the results of the fourth meeting of States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, and also the concrete measures that have occurred on the ground.

On small arms and light weapons, my country continues to see them as a serious threat to the security of our peoples and the stability of States. In order to extirpate this evil the countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) adopted a Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons in West Africa and has established national commissions to combat the proliferation of light weapons. As is recommended in both the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, adopted in July 2001, and the Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons adopted in Bamako in 2000, only concerted and determined action by the international community can solve this burning problem. In the spirit of this concern, last year Mali, on behalf of the ECOWAS countries, submitted to the Committee a draft resolution entitled, "Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them". This year again the draft resolution will be on the agenda of the Committee and will be submitted by Mali on behalf of the same organization. My country, the current Chairman of ECOWAS, would be grateful for the valuable support of Member States for this important draft resolution, submitted for the greatest good of the peoples of the West African subregion, and well beyond that, of the international community as a whole.

Mr. Neil (Jamaica): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the 14 member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that are members of the United Nations.

There is no greater duty to be performed by the United Nations than the maintenance of international peace and security, and that gives particular importance to the work of the First Committee. The Charter establishes the framework for a system of collective security, based on the prohibition of the use of force, the peaceful settlement of disputes and for the functioning of multilateral institutions for enforcing these principles. The progressive reduction of armaments and the achievement of the goal of general and complete disarmament are of the utmost significance in realizing these objectives. We believe it is important that these general principles be reaffirmed as the foundation for our efforts. No matter what may be the challenges and the perceived realities of the moment, the promotion of disarmament must play a central role in United Nations efforts to promote peace and cooperation among States.

But to begin with, we should acknowledge the seriousness of the problems we face. In the international situation, new challenges have surfaced as a result of acts of international terrorism. The military responses, which have introduced new dimensions to perceptions of international security, naturally will have an impact on the disarmament agenda. That is combined with the persistence of conflicts, particularly in the Middle East, and of some regional rivalries and disputes that continue to raise the spectre of war. At the diplomatic level, progress is stalled by the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament which, regrettably, had nothing to report beyond the continuance of consultations over its programme of work.

All that is not encouraging, and in the current international situation, there is serious risk of losing ground in disarmament efforts within an atmosphere increasingly conducive to militarism. World military expenditures have been increasing since 1998, reversing the trend of reduction over the previous 10 years. For the year 2001, there was a significant increase that is expected to exceed the estimate provided by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) of $839 billion. SIPRI notes that important changes in the size and structure of the armaments industry have occurred since the early nineties, resulting from increased concentration and

internationalization of arms production; an increased level of privatization and commercialization; and an increased emphasis on exports to compensate for reduced domestic procurement. These are consistent with the overall trends in globalization which increases the danger of proliferation from the reduced transparency and accountability that make export controls more difficult.

These developments at the political, diplomatic and commercial levels justify feelings of concern and discouragement, but should not give rise to cynicism or undue pessimism. We should continue to pursue our disarmament efforts relentlessly and with perseverance. We should build on what has already been achieved by careful and systematic implementation of existing agreements. In the priority area of nuclear disarmament, renewed efforts should be made at the political level to bring into force the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). There is need for a new momentum, and greater public awareness should be aroused to bring pressure for moving this process forward, especially in relation to ratification by the nuclear Powers. Jamaica will be doing its part by hosting a regional seminar for Caribbean and Latin American States in December this year to help to promote universal adherence to the CTBT. These initiatives are important for the strengthening of an effective non-proliferation regime where already some progress has been made. But more needs to be done by the nuclear Powers who have clear responsibilities and obligations to fulfil under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) itself and in the implementation of the commitments agreed at the 2000 Review Conference. That would give greater assurance to non-nuclear-weapon States and would reduce security concerns about the possible use of nuclear weapons.

At this point, I take the opportunity to welcome the decision by the Government of Cuba to accede to the NPT and to ratify the Treaty of Tlatelolco. It is an important step that will promote regional solidarity in disarmament and is an act of faith in the international security system.

With regard to chemical and biological weapons, we should continue to develop and refine the verification arrangements that will promote even greater confidence in the effectiveness of these agreements.

It has been a little over one year since the convening of the important United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. The urgency for the effective implementation of the Programme of Action adopted at the Conference continues to be emphasized by Caribbean member States. The provision of material and technical support for training and monitoring mechanisms to control the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons assumes greater importance every day. It is becoming increasingly clear that the interlinkage between the traffic in illicit arms and light weapons, the drug trade, terrorism and organized crime, poses serious challenges to social stability, security and economic development in the CARICOM subregion. We need an effective regime to control the supply of small arms to developing countries, and in particular to countries in situations of conflict. Of great concern is the inadequacy of existing regulation and the relative ease with which small arms can be bought and sold and enter the contraband trade. CARICOM, therefore, continues to support the establishment of a system of transfer controls in the jurisdiction of producer countries that would allow for registration and the marking and tracing of weapons sold.

The work undertaken by the Department for Disarmament Affairs, in conjunction with other relevant United Nations departments and agencies, in the implementation of the Programme of Action has been significant. We particularly welcome the intention expressed by the Department to establish a small arms advisory service to assist in the implementation of the Programme of Action. Special mention should also be made of the work undertaken by the Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, which has been active in its promotion of the implementation of the Programme of Action. It is hoped that the necessary resources will be found to continue its work.

CARICOM continues to call for the cessation of the trans-shipment of irradiated material through the Caribbean Sea. We continue to place emphasis on the conclusions and recommendations of the Sixth Review Conference of the NPT on this issue. At the same time, while recognizing the right of States to the peaceful uses of nuclear material, we believe that the time is now opportune for the international community to consider the establishment of a comprehensive regulatory framework to promote State responsibility

in areas dealing with disclosure, liability and compensation in the event of accidents during such trans-shipments.

Let me once again reiterate the importance of a coordinated response to the issues present on our agenda. There is need for a renewed commitment to negotiations and to an avoidance of political polarization which stymies progress. We owe it to succeeding generations to move forward actively towards the achievement of disarmament, development and the strengthening of international peace and security.

In relation to the machinery for carrying forward the disarmament agenda, there is need to review its functioning and to come with some more acceptable arrangements for disarmament negotiations. The current deadlock has to be broken, especially in relation to the programme of work of the Conference on Disarmament and on the issue of its enlargement. In addition, we should make greater use of the Disarmament Commission as a forum within the United Nations to deliberate on issues on the disarmament agenda. In light of all the current issues affecting disarmament, a review of progress and of existing institutional arrangements is needed. We therefore believe it is important that a decision be taken during this session of the General Assembly for the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and for the necessary preparatory arrangements to be made.

In concluding, Mr. Chairman, allow me to convey to you the congratulations of the CARICOM delegations on your election to chair the Committee and to assure you of the full cooperation of our delegations with you and your Bureau as you carry out your responsibilities. Allow me also to express our appreciation to Mr. Dhanapala and the staff of the Department for Disarmament Affairs for their dedication, reflected in the high standard of their work, in the cause of disarmament.

Mr. Own (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset it gives me pleasure to express to you, Sir, on behalf of my delegation and my behalf, sincere congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of the Committee. Our congratulations go also to the other members of the Bureau. We are fully confident that your experience and wisdom will enable us to achieve the desired results, which will have a great effect on the development of the disarmament process and the strengthening of international peace and security. We would also like to express our great appreciation and thanks to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Dhanapala, for his statement to the Committee and for the efforts persistently made by his Department to fulfil its mandate. I cannot fail to join those who have preceded me in welcoming Switzerland and Timor-Leste to membership of the United Nations. We look forward to their effective participation in all its organs and agencies.

More than three decades have elapsed since the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). During that period six review conferences have been held to review the results achieved in the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and their reduction with a view to their total elimination and the establishment of a world free from nuclear weapons. Despite all this, the results achieved thus far are disappointing, indeed alarming. They portend catastrophes that will have grave consequences for all members of the international community. The number of States possessing nuclear weapons has increased. The number of nuclear warheads possessed by those countries is enough to destroy our planet thousands of times over. The destructive capability of these weapons has increased hundreds of times. Faced with this alarming fact, the international community, in particular the nuclear-weapon States, bear great responsibility to achieve the purposes and principles of the NPT. That can be achieved through demonstrating good will and entering into serious negotiations that aim irreversibly at the conclusion of bilateral and multilateral agreements and instruments in the fields of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. They must honour all the commitments and undertakings made under the NPT and under the final declarations of the review conferences. That includes proceeding to conclude a multilateral agreement on security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the NPT, as well as a commitment to implement article VI in the manner detailed in subparagraph 12 of paragraph 15 of the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference. They must also commit to the implementation of paragraph 4 (c) of the 1995 decision on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East region.

In this regard, my delegation wishes to reaffirm the following: first, the need to continue the reduction of strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons by collective, bilateral and unilateral initiatives, and considering such initiatives to be part and parcel of the nuclear disarmament process.

Secondly, the promotion of confidence-building and transparency by the nuclear-weapon States in order to limit the threats caused by these weapons, including the conclusion of measures to limit the battle readiness of nuclear-weapons systems.

Thirdly, the Conference on Disarmament must, without delay, establish an ad hoc committee to deal with nuclear disarmament. It must resume its negotiations on a non-discriminatory, multilateral, effective and internationally-verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes. That treaty must take into account two objectives — nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation.

Fourthly, the international community, in particular the five major Powers, must bring pressure to bear on the Israeli entity to accede to the NPT and to place all its military and civilian nuclear facilities under the safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). This is all the more urgent in view of the fact that it is the only country in a region suffering from the highest degree of tension that has not yet assumed such commitments. The nuclear weapons it possesses are a cause of alarm and a threat to the peace and security of the Middle East and to international peace and security.

The lack of political will by some States, particularly a certain major Power, has always been a major impediment to the achievement of any success or progress in the field of disarmament in all its aspects. The international community has not been able to maintain the momentum generated at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-I) during which the international community managed to adopt a consensus Final Document that continues to be a high point in the field of disarmament. The second and third such sessions failed to achieve the consensus necessary to adopt a final document comparable to the achievement of the first session. Indeed, we have failed to hold a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-IV) despite persistent calls from the majority of the members of the international community.

The priorities of disarmament agreed upon by the international community in the Final Document of SSOD-I must not be forgotten. Indeed they must be strongly recalled. There is a need to consolidate and implement them because of their great importance in achieving arms control and disarmament. These priorities are nuclear weapons, followed by other weapons of mass destruction, biological and chemical weapons and, finally, conventional weapons. The Fifth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC) held in Geneva in 2001 failed to adopt a final declaration. The United States delegation proposed the termination of the work of the ad hoc group mandated to conclude a protocol to strengthen the Convention. That is all clear evidence of the lack of the requisite political will that we sorely need in order to make the necessary progress in all fields of disarmament.

My country has attached great importance to the question of disarmament. It has acceded to and signed many of the international agreements and treaties, such as the NPT, the BWC, the Geneva Protocol on Poisonous Gases, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the safeguards agreements with the IAEA. My country has effectively participated in the relevant meetings both internationally and regionally based on its deep conviction of the need to establish a world free from nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, including chemical and biological weapons.

My country wishes to devote its efforts to eliminating poverty and endemic diseases, including AIDS. My country is committed to helping all peoples languishing under the yoke of colonialism and occupation in order to achieve self-determination, freedom and independence and put an end to suppression and injustice. My country is committed to the elimination of all kinds of terrorism, including State terrorism and organized terrorism, the dangers of which have not spared any part of the world, including my country, and most recently what happened in the United States last year.

My country is suffering from a number of problems resulting from an enormous number of landmines and remnants of war. The United Nations has estimated that there are no less than 10 million mines on Libyan territory planted during the Second World War. That has impeded socio-economic development in my country and has resulted in the maiming and killing of thousands of innocent civilians. Through you, Sir, we call upon all countries that have planted such mines to fully and promptly respond to calls from my country to provide us with mine-field maps and information, as well as technical and material assistance, and to pay reparations proportionate to the damage the mines have caused.

Here we wish to pay tribute to the historic Declaration concluded between Libya and Italy in 1998 which called, inter alia, for clearing mines from Libya and the signing by both countries of a Memorandum of Understanding in November 2001 for the implementation of the Declaration. From this forum we call on the other two countries, Britain and Germany, to follow Italy's example and sign similar agreements with Libya, to provide it with the necessary material and technical assistance for demining, and to pay the appropriate compensation to the Libyan people for the damages suffered.

This Committee has since 1981 been dealing with an item called "Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region". My country has been calling for this region to be declared a region of peace and security so that all its peoples will be able to live in conditions of conciliation and mutual respect. We must all work for the Mediterranean to be a lake of peace and a meeting point of all cultures and civilizations. That can only be achieved through the complete withdrawal of all foreign military fleets and the closure of foreign military bases that no longer have a reason for existence, especially since the end of the cold war. Respect for the sovereignty of all countries of the region, non-interference in their internal affairs and settlement of all their disputes by peaceful means, through dialogue and without the use of force or the imposition of sanctions — these are all important requirements of the region. There is a need to put an end to foreign occupation and to ensure respect for the right of peoples to their self-determination and independence.

The Tripoli meeting of western Mediterranean States, known as the 5+5, held in May 2002, is an expression of the spirit of that cooperation and an important step in the right direction to achieve complete and comprehensive cooperation among the States of the region so as to contribute effectively to the strengthening of international peace and security in the Mediterranean basin.

Finally, I cannot fail to welcome Cuba's decision to accede to the NPT and ratify the Treaty of Tlatelolco. That is an important step towards non-proliferation and disarmament.

Mr. Chindawongse (Thailand): On behalf of the delegation of Thailand, I should like to join other speakers before me in congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. I am confident that, under your able leadership and guidance, the First Committee will produce tangible results, thus contributing to disarmament efforts worldwide. I should also like to convey the appreciation of my delegation to Ambassador André Erdös of Hungary and other members of his Bureau for their contributions to the success of the First Committee last year. Thailand would also like to associate itself with the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) statement to be delivered subsequently by Myanmar.

The outrageous attack that led to the sad loss of the lives of thousands of innocent civilians on 11 September last year serves to remind us of the desperate and unimaginable measures that terrorists are willing to take to achieve their ends. We can never dismiss the possibility that weapons of mass destruction and related technologies could some day fall into the hands of international terrorists. That requires all of us to be even more vigilant.

It is therefore essential that we reinforce multilateralism and support multilateral regimes, particularly those in the disarmament field. For the challenge posed by international terrorism and its possible acquisition of weapons of mass destruction can only be met effectively through the concerted and coordinated action of all States large and small. Indeed, we should take up the Secretary-General's call in his recent address to the United Nations General Assembly to make full use of multilateral institutions. How best can we achieve that?

First, we need to continue to maintain, if not accelerate, the momentum in existing multilateral disarmament regimes. At the global level, the Treaty on

the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the bedrock for the total elimination and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. The results of the First Meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the NPT Review Conference in 2005, held in April this year, should help to strengthen the momentum in the NPT process. We welcome Cuba's recent decision to accede to the NPT and to ratify the Treaty of Tlatelolco. The critical role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in helping to ensure nuclear safety and nuclear non-proliferation should be reinforced. In this connection, we are encouraged that at the recent meeting of the IAEA Board of Governors and the IAEA General Conference in Vienna, members of the international community attached high importance to measures to strengthen international cooperation in nuclear radiation, transport and waste safety, as well as nuclear verification and security of materials. It is therefore essential that developing countries have ready access to technical assistance, so that they may build their capacities to ensure greater nuclear safety in the development of research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. At the regional level, nuclear-weapon-free zones are an important instrument in disarmament and non-proliferation efforts. We thereby call on all States, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, to support the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. We also welcome the recent progress in the discussions for the establishment of a Central Asia nuclear-weapon-free zone.

Secondly, we need to reverse the detrimental trends in some multilateral disarmament regimes brought about by both unilateral action and inaction. The failure of the Fifth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) last November to produce substantive results, has potentially placed the BWC regime in jeopardy. Despite the holding of the Conference on Measures to Facilitate the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) last November, the refusal by key annex 2 States, particularly the nuclear-weapon States, to ratify the Treaty, has the potential to erode confidence in this important instrument for nuclear non-proliferation. We for our part are expediting our internal processes in order to ratify the CTBT as soon as possible.

Thirdly, we need to support new initiatives to strengthen multilateral disarmament regimes. The launching of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD-IV) which should, among other things, help to promote nuclear disarmament, is long overdue. We therefore hope that SSOD-IV will be convened as soon as possible with the participation of all States.

The threat of weapons of mass destruction looms over all of us, but we should not be complacent about small arms and light weapons either, for they are the real culprits, causing death and destruction every day. More and more people, including women and children, are being killed or maimed by small arms and light weapons as well as by landmines. It is these very weapons that could give our common enemies, the drug traffickers, the upper hand in our war against drugs. The international community took a significant step forward to address the challenge posed by the uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons with the adoption of the Programme of Action at the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, held in July 2001.

Thailand has taken many steps since then to follow up the results of the Conference. A national coordinating body, under the leadership of the National Security Council, has been established to examine ways to ensure effective implementation of the Programme of Action. Thailand also actively participates in the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts, which met last July in Geneva, to assist the Secretary-General in undertaking a study to examine the feasibility of developing an international instrument to trace illicit small arms and light weapons. We support all efforts to ensure strong momentum in the follow-up to the Programme of Action, leading to the biennial meeting on small arms and light weapons next year. Regarding the venue and timing of that meeting, we strongly urge that it be held in New York in July in order to ensure that the greatest number of delegations are able to participate in the small arms and light weapons process. We also ask that Member States make good on their commitments to provide technical and financial assistance in order for all States to have the requisite capacity to implement effectively the Programme of Action.

The recent conclusion of the fourth meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (Ottawa Convention) in Geneva brings into focus yet

again the devastating humanitarian impact of the landmines problem and the need to achieve universalization of the Convention as soon as possible. Thailand has played an active role in promoting the issue of victim assistance and in comprehensively addressing the landmines issue at the regional level through two seminars held in Thailand in November 2001 and May 2002. Our contribution to help address the global challenge posed by anti-personnel mines will culminate in Thailand's hosting of the Fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention in September 2003. I therefore take this opportunity to invite all States Parties and other countries to attend and participate in this meeting.

Multilateralism and effective multilateral disarmament regimes are our best bet to overcome the challenges posed by international terrorism, weapons of mass destruction and the threat of the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Let us renew our commitments to multilateralism and jointly undertake efforts to make our world a safer and more secure place for future generations.

Mr. Sood (India): Let me congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee and also assure you of the full cooperation of my delegation in the fulfilment of the responsibility entrusted to you.

Since we last met in the shadow of events that shaped the subsequent course of disarmament and international security approaches, we have seen a change in the emphasis of the work of this Committee. A greater sense of urgency has permeated our discourse, while in sharp contrast, we have become increasingly aware of the irony that the pace of our multilateral efforts has in fact suffered setbacks. The political will necessary to kick-start the negotiations of long-awaited and future-oriented disarmament treaties has not been in evidence for yet another year. If we do not get our act together we are in danger of engaging in activities full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.

We need to shake ourselves out of our stupor and take concrete initiatives that address both the issues that have remained with us for a long time and those that have emerged in the post-11 September 2001 context.

Let me begin with the grave threat that confronts and preoccupies all of us. When addressing the General Assembly last year, the United Nations Secretary-General said:

> "While the world was unable to prevent the 11 September attacks, there is much we can do to help prevent future terrorist acts carried out with weapons of mass destruction. The greatest danger arises from a non-State group, or even an individual, acquiring and using a nuclear, biological or chemical weapon. Such a weapon could be delivered without the need for any missile or any other sophisticated delivery system". (*A/56/PV.12*)

The United Nations Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters has since dealt with the threat posed by terrorism and weapons of mass destruction and has made certain useful recommendations. Further steps need to be taken in the United Nations framework since this is not a problem specific to a particular country or region.

Given the global implications, it will not be sufficient to address the problem behind the closed doors of selective clubs. Hence, India proposes to introduce a new draft resolution to the Committee requesting the Secretary-General to undertake a study on the issues related to terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, with the assistance of a panel of governmental experts. Given the need for urgency, the draft resolution proposes that the study be completed during the first half of 2003 and submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session next year.

In my consultations with delegations, some concern has been raised about whether we have the provision of adequate funding. Given the manner in which the funding is programmed, namely on a biennial basis, quite clearly it was not possible for us to foresee the events of 11 September 2001 and therefore it was not possible for us to include such a study in the past. But given the urgency and the consensus that exists on the nature of the new threats we are facing, I am confident that we will be able to find the necessary resources in order to deal with this issue. Therefore, I hope that all members of the Committee will be in a position to support this timely initiative.

The issue of nuclear weapons pre-dates our concern with terrorism and goes beyond. The indivisible security to which we are all entitled will be possible only when we succeed in eliminating all

nuclear weapons from the arsenals of the world. Despite being compelled to exercise our nuclear option in order to preserve our strategic autonomy, India remains committed to the goal of global nuclear disarmament. My delegation is bringing before the Committee yet again, as it has done since 1982, the draft resolution calling for a convention to be negotiated for prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances.

The failure of the existing non-proliferation regime can be attributed to its very discriminatory nature, which has been extended in perpetuity, thus compounding the problem. Until unequivocal undertakings given for the total elimination of nuclear arsenals are honoured, it will be necessary for all nuclear-weapon States to take steps to reassure the world that they will reduce the risk of accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons. There can be no justification for thousands of nuclear weapons to be maintained in a state of hair-trigger alert, with possible disastrous consequences. The call in the United Nations Millennium Declaration to seek to eliminate the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction, including by convening an international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers, can no longer be ignored. India's draft resolution, entitled "Reducing nuclear danger", will be presented to the Committee for the fifth consecutive year in the expectation that it will receive wider support and convince those who are still sceptical of the need for early concrete action.

As India prepares to assume its responsibilities as the President of the Conference on Disarmament (CD), with effect from 1 January 2003, let me reiterate the commitment of my country to participate constructively and in good faith in the fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) negotiations in order to develop a non-discriminatory and verifiable treaty to prohibit the future production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices. India is also committed to preventing the further militarization and weaponization of outer space, which should be preserved for the full range of cooperative, peaceful and developmental activities. These commitments prompted India to support the compromise Amorim proposal as a possible way forward to commence substantive work in the CD. Since that proposal could not lead to a consensus among all members, we have welcomed the cross-group initiative of the five Ambassadors, and expressed our readiness to support it if it can lead us out of the long-prevailing stalemate at the Conference.

As President-designate of the CD, India, together with the outgoing President from Hungary, will engage in extensive consultations in the margins of this Committee in an attempt to untie the Gordian knot. Our attempt will not be to seek quick procedural solutions, but to ascertain whether there is preparedness by all concerned to display the necessary political will to find a substantive solution. The validity of multilateral disarmament negotiations in the sole forum designated for the purpose needs to be upheld. It should be possible for us to translate our lamentations about the current state of global security issues into a collective effort to breathe life into the CD so that it can be put to work for the collective good.

India participated actively in the work of the Panel of Governmental Experts, established to prepare a report on the issue of missiles in all its aspects, which completed its work this year. We have also followed with interest other initiatives aimed at dealing with the issue of missiles. We wish to see the norms against the proliferation of missiles strengthened through transparent, multilateral agreements on the basis of equal and undiminished security, which also ensure that civilian space-related applications are not adversely affected.

In recent years, in the name of non-proliferation, there has been an excessive reliance on export controls by select groups of countries. While such measures have not been fully effective, the denial of so-called dual-use technology and equipment has done immense damage to the peaceful developmental efforts of developing countries in a number of spheres of economic activity. There is a need for an effective and transparent system of export controls that would conform to the objectives of non-proliferation without affecting the peaceful applications of these technologies. There is no place for discriminatory mechanisms — some of which run contrary to existing treaty provisions — that deprive developing countries of the benefits of path-breaking scientific and technological developments. In order to address this critical issue, India will bring to the Committee, as it has done since 1989, a draft resolution entitled "Role of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament".

All of us have a stake in ensuring that all the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) are implemented fully and effectively. As an original State Party to this non-discriminatory treaty, India is fully committed to this task. We are also relieved that certain unhealthy developments that threatened the working of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) have been resolved with the cooperation of all States Parties.

India is deeply concerned by the circumstances in which the Fifth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) had to be abruptly adjourned last year. Moreover, developments since then do not bode well for the resumed Review Conference this year. The anthrax incidents of last year, instead of prompting the world community to act collectively to challenge the threat of biological weapons, have instead led to a path that rejects the framework for multilateral action and may threaten the norm that has existed for 30 years. While national implementation measures and certain group efforts may be worth pursuing, they cannot substitute for meaningful multilateral efforts to strengthen the Convention. We hope that the resumed Review Conference can be saved from failure by reaching agreement, at least on modest follow-up work, in a truly multilateral context. At a time when the threat from biological weapons proliferation and bioterrorism is of great concern, it would be tragic to undermine the norm established by the BWC.

The Second Review Conference of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons fortunately had greater success by expanding the scope of the Convention to cover non-international armed conflicts and by establishing a Group of Governmental Experts to address the issue of explosive remnants of war and mines other than anti-personnel mines. India has been an active participant in the process, having ratified all its Protocols, including the Amended Protocol on landmines.

As the designated Chair of the Meeting of States Parties later this year, we hope to be able to carry forward the current work in a realistic manner with the cooperation of all States Parties.

The work of the Panel on small arms and light weapons dealing with the issue of marking and record-keeping for the tracing of illicit small arms and light weapons has commenced its work this year. We appreciate the confidence shown in the election of India, by acclamation, as Chairman of the Panel and hope to successfully complete the task assigned to it with the cooperation of all members of the Panel.

India welcomes the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education, on which we were represented. We note in particular the emphasis in the report for new thinking and the need for reinvigorated international efforts and cooperation in this field. There is an urgent need to strengthen the societal dimensions of disarmament, in which the academic, research and non-governmental organization communities can make a substantial contribution.

This year, we have all been preoccupied with dealing with terrorism that transcends borders. At the same time, we have witnessed a reluctance to urgently address long-term concerns that have remained with us. International law is based on the creation of global norms that sovereign States choose to observe. Collective acceptance creates legitimization, for there exists no global sovereign. History teaches us that unilateral actions, or those taken by exclusive alliances that do not meet the test of legitimacy, weaken the norms of international law. In dealing with problems of global reach and implication, we need to act collectively using non-discriminatory and transparent approaches in an inclusive manner. We need, through our action in this Committee, to re-establish the validity and effectiveness of multilateral efforts.

The Chairman: For the Committee to be able to complete its debate by 6 p.m. today, may I appeal to representatives to limit their statements to 10 minutes.

Mr. Assaf (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Committee. My delegation will find it a pleasure to cooperate with you for the success of our work. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

The United Nations Charter tells us of our commitment to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, of which weapons are the principal instrument. Weapons are intended primarily for the protection and survival of States. But today they have become a real threat to the States and the peoples of the world. It is therefore the duty of mankind to find the means to reduce their danger as much as possible. That is why the Committee has been tackling the problem of

disarmament and promoting security since 1978, which saw the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Our Committee continues these efforts today by examining the 18 items on its agenda at this session. We think it is possible to reduce the danger posed by weapons provided that States demonstrate genuine political will. That can be done through a series of measures promoted by the Committee which can be summed up as follows: first, we must continue efforts to educate people about disarmament in order to make people sensitive to and aware of the dangers of armaments. We must use the pressure of public opinion as an instrument to put pressure on Governments to make the necessary changes and to adopt policies that are conducive to disarmament. This exercise of public education has become easier and more rapid because of globalization and advanced technologies, especially the Internet.

We should not ignore the role that can be played by non-governmental organizations as well as the United Nations through colloquiums, seminars and conferences on this subject, and also by publications distributed to Member States.

Secondly, transparency in disarmament plays a very important role in reducing tension among countries and in promoting mutual trust. The United Nations has adopted fundamental measures in this area, such as the 1992 United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and also the request to Member States to provide the Secretary-General with information on their military expenditures. My Government is committed to providing an account of its military expenditures to the Secretariat. Those expenditures have gone down this year by 8.5 per cent over last year. My delegation believes that the role of the Register of Conventional Arms will be truly complete if it extends also to nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, instead of being confined only to a group of seven conventional weapons.

Thirdly, the establishment of zones free of weapons of mass destruction is also a basis for disarmament. The establishment of such zones is usually conducted on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned and on the basis of a national or international initiative. There should be more of these zones so that they cover more extensive demilitarized areas of the globe. On this basis the United Nations has proposed the establishment of zones free of nuclear weapons, one of them in the Middle East. However, this objective has remained a dead letter, in spite of 28 resolutions on this subject, the most recent being General Assembly resolution 56/21 of last year, calling on States of the region to refrain from manufacturing or acquiring nuclear weapons and to place all their nuclear facilities under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) comprehensive safeguards.

In spite of the fact that it joined the consensus on this resolution, Israel has refused to implement it. In its reply to the Secretary-General in document A/57/214, Israel unambiguously declared: "General Assembly resolution 56/21 ... does not adequately reflect Israel's position vis-à-vis the nuclear issue in the Middle East".

So, it was as if the purpose of the General Assembly resolution were to reflect the will of Israel rather than for Israel to abide by the will of the General Assembly.

Fourthly, joining disarmament treaties and participating in international negotiations on the subject will strengthen international cooperation and create a favourable climate for the establishment of true partnerships. Based on that principle, my country and all States in the Middle East, except Israel, have become parties to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Israel, on the other hand, is turning a deaf ear to repeated international appeals calling on it to accede to that Treaty and to other instruments on the subject, and thus to ease tension in the Middle East. Its attitude also prevents the disarmament treaties from acquiring the necessary universality.

There is a close link between disarmament and development. In our world today, which has limited resources, money spent on arms has reached unimaginable levels, estimated at $850 billion to date. Such excessive spending constitutes a painful contradiction when we realize that one third of the planet's inhabitants are living poorly on less than $2 a day. Certain types of weapons, such as mines, are dangerous in more than one way. Apart from the vast sums that are squandered on them and the human loss they cause, they are inflicting irreversible damage to certain land areas, precisely the areas needed for industrial and agricultural purposes. That is true of southern Lebanon where, during its occupation, Israel left behind some 450,000 landmines, according to United Nations estimates.

In conclusion, it is our sincere hope that the Committee will be successful in its disarmament mission and in its efforts to promote peace and security. The survival of States will need to be strengthened by the principles of international law, not by military capabilities, so there will be no need for weapons. As Montesquieu said, "Empires built by weapons will have to be defended by weapons".

Mr. Issa (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): First, I should like to express to you, Sir, our congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. Our congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau.

As we meet in the First Committee to consider issues related to disarmament and international security, our assessment of the limited progress made in these fields during the past year, as well as emerging trends, leaves no doubt that we are indeed witnessing difficult times, where positive developments have been overshadowed by serious challenges to multilateral disarmament mechanisms and to the future of multilateral efforts in these areas.

Here we welcome the positive proposal by Mr. Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, in his opening statement to the Committee, to establish an international commission on weapons of mass destruction. Today we are in dire need of dealing with the issue of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in a comprehensive and complete manner, and also of investigating other new and effective proposals that would break out of the traditional way of dealing with this topic, that is, "to think outside the box". We also need to provide serious, innovative recommendations that would contribute to promoting a dialogue on weapons of mass destruction, terrorism and missiles, in a balanced, methodological framework that would take into consideration the imperative needs of international peace and security as well as the requirements of legitimate security for States. Once again I should like to express our appreciation of the valuable contribution made by Mr. Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs.

I wish to talk about some positive elements. The delegation of Egypt welcomes the successful conclusion of negotiations between the United States and the Russian Federation, highlighted by the signature of the Treaty of Moscow, which launched a new security partnership and strategic dialogue between the two countries. It is our sincere hope that both countries will eventually apply the principle of irreversibility to nuclear weapons so they can be de-alerted or taken out of deployment over the next decade, thereby providing a true contribution towards the total elimination of nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament.

Egypt welcomes the endeavours of the five Central Asian States to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region, which we hope will add impetus to the establishment of such zones in other areas of the world. We also welcome Cuba's decision to accede to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), thereby bringing us closer to realizing the universality of the Treaty. While Cuba's decision highlights the critical importance of the NPT as the cornerstone of both nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament, we regret that the common goal of achieving the universality of the Treaty remains elusive, both in South Asia and the Middle East, and that nuclear disarmament efforts continue to lack the necessary momentum.

With regard to nuclear disarmament, commitment was undertaken by all NPT States Parties in 2002 for achieving nuclear disarmament, and 13 steps were agreed upon to lead to that objective. The commitment by the five nuclear-weapon States to pursue the elimination of their nuclear arsenals is both moral and legal and, based on our understanding of that commitment, Egypt, with its partners in the New Agenda Coalition, will be presenting a draft resolution that, among other issues, addresses the laxity that has crept into global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts since May 2000.

It is with deep regret that we stand here at another session of the General Assembly while the Middle East has witnessed unprecedented and escalating violence. We see no progress towards achieving the universality of the NPT in the Middle East, an objective overwhelmingly supported by the wider body of the international community, whether in the context of the General Assembly or the NPT States Parties.

In fact the Middle East has witnessed more violence and escalation during the past year than any of us would have thought possible. The achievement of universal adherence to the NPT in the Middle East remains a priority for Egypt, as well as for the

overwhelming membership of the international community, and we will continue to pursue this issue in the General Assembly through a draft resolution calling for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, and another that calls upon Israel, the only State in the Middle East that has yet to accede to the NPT, to adhere to the Treaty.

In this context, we welcome the announcement by Iraq to allow the resumption of United Nations arms inspections on its soil, and its cooperation in these efforts is an essential step towards the lifting of sanctions that were imposed on Iraq more than a decade ago. We must also recall that those disarmament activities in Iraq were mandated by the United Nations Security Council in 1991 as steps towards the goal of establishing in the Middle East a zone free from weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. Despite this fact, more than a decade has passed since the adoption of Security Council resolution 687 (1991) and no progress has been made towards achieving that essential objective. It is our firm belief that the credibility of the non-proliferation regime in the Middle East will depend to a significant extent on future action by the international community and by the Security Council towards realizing the wider objectives of disarmament and non-proliferation in the Middle East.

As I mentioned earlier, serious challenges exist to the multilateral disarmament infrastructure and to the future of multilateral efforts in arms control and non-proliferation. The updating of strategic doctrines in a manner that sets out new rationales for continued retention of nuclear weapons, their development and deployment, and even for their possible use, is certainly among the more serious challenges. But equally critical is the challenge to future multilateral action with regard to disarmament and international peace and security. The impasse in the programme of work of the Conference on Disarmament is also a case in point, while there is recognition that the issues of nuclear disarmament, prevention of an arms race in outer space, and a fissile material cut-off treaty are all issues of concern to the membership of the Conference on Disarmament and to the broader international community. In spite of this, there has been no reciprocity, understanding or acceptance of the legitimate security concerns among other members of the Conference on Disarmament which, again, are only legitimate concerns. In our view, the crisis in the Conference on Disarmament transcends the tactical procedures and linkages between the elements of the programme of work and is symptomatic of a much deeper ailment in the state of international relations and of the role that multilateral action and institutions should play.

Another equally pertinent issue is that of missiles. Egypt commends the work of the Panel of Governmental Experts mandated with the preparation of a report of the issue in all its aspects, and endorses the outcome of its work. We are pleased that the group succeeded in producing a report on this complex issue and stress that, despite any misgivings concerning the brevity of the recommendations section of the report, it must be viewed as an initial step by the United Nations to address this particular issue in a multilateral way that will provide for more research and study and serve as a basis for further work by the Organization.

On the other hand, the International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation has undergone several stages of development since its inception and circulation by States members of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) in the year 2000. I must say that Egypt engaged in good faith in these efforts to consider the International Code of Conduct during two meetings held in Paris and Madrid in 2002. However, these efforts somehow always fell short of the necessary requirements of a multilateral exercise in the correct sense of the word. It is our view that the credibility and success of the International Code of Conduct or of any non-negotiated instrument or unilateral arrangement that would monitor exports, will depend largely on whether the final version drafted by the authors manages to address the issues pertinent to the debate on missiles in a balanced and objective manner. It should deal with all the different and equally important aspects of this case, so that the Code will succeed in attracting support from those States that possess ballistic missiles.

As for small arms and light weapons, it is important to recall the responsibility of States individually to implement the United Nations Programme of Action, which was approved in 2001, and work at the regional level if possible at all. That is particularly important as we approach the 2003 meeting to assess progress in implementation of the Programme of Action.

Finally, the delegation of Egypt wishes to draw attention to the continued commitment and support of the work of the United Nations in all fields of disarmament. We hope that the increased activities of the Organization in discussing the relationship between terrorism and weapons of mass destruction will continue in a way that will take into account stability within a legal framework dealing with weapons of mass destruction and within the ongoing development of the legal code at the United Nations that governs the question of terrorism. Consequently, it is important to proceed very cautiously and attentively in a way that will keep the required balance of the role of the international community within this particular question. Perhaps a first step to implement the recommendation of the Secretary-General should be to establish United Nations machinery to monitor international developments on weapons of mass destruction and terrorism, as one international source, and to provide a report on this to the General Assembly. This can be done while affirming the importance of securing the necessary financing for such machinery in a way that would maintain its viability and its active efforts. By making it an integral part of the machinery of the United Nations this machinery would be subject neither to external direction nor to other sources of financing.

Ms. Cedeño Reyes (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the Venezuelan delegation I should like to reiterate our congratulations at seeing you preside over the work of the Committee. We also congratulate the other Bureau members. You can count on our cooperation in ensuring the success of this important Committee's work in the areas of disarmament and the preservation of international peace and security.

My delegation endorses the statement by the Costa Rican delegation, on behalf of the Rio Group. However, I should also like to express the position of the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela with respect to the fundamental issues before the Committee.

At the Millennium Summit, heads of State or Government expressed support for general and complete disarmament to guarantee international peace and security in the world. I am pleased to state that in my country this is an objective that holds constitutional hierarchy in our basic charter. My country is unequivocally committed to disarmament. We have stated that at the Conference on Disarmament (CD), at the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and in the work of this Committee, with a view to building a culture of international peace and security.

My delegation would like very warmly to congratulate the Government of Cuba on announcing its decision to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and to ratify the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, known as the Treaty of Tlatelolco. That represents one step further in our hemisphere because it confirms our objectives to maintain our region free of nuclear weapons. My country looks forward to the universality of the NPT, as agreed at the last Conference of States Parties. My delegation supports the formulation of a binding legal instrument, under which the nuclear Powers would make an unequivocal commitment not to use or threaten the use of nuclear weapons against those States that are not nuclear parties to the Treaty.

My country is pleased to see that agreements have been drawn up for nuclear-weapon-free zones in different parts of the world, because that contributes to strengthening the non-proliferation regime. We particularly welcome the conclusion of negotiations to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia, like those that have already been established in other parts of the world. We also believe that it is necessary for States possessing nuclear weapons to conduct negotiations in good faith and to proceed, in accordance with the terms of article VI of the Treaty, to reduce their nuclear arsenals. My country is prepared to cooperate in order to ensure that the 2005 Review Conference will conclude successfully and that the agreements adopted at the 2000 Review Conference will be implemented.

My country, in May this year, ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We urge countries that have not yet done so to follow our example. With regard to the peaceful uses of outer space, we have supported the proposal by China and Russia to create a future international legal agreement on preventing the deployment of weapons in space, and on preventing the use or threat of use of force against objects in space.

My country notes with concern the indiscriminate use of biological and chemical weapons which

represent a danger to all mankind. We therefore support the strengthening of the two conventions on those weapons. We also believe that weapons of mass destruction are a danger to the international community. We are therefore pleased to see the conclusion of negotiations for the creation of an International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation. My country has been taking part, at a very high level, in those negotiations and notes that the instrument will be adopted at an international conference at The Hague in November.

We are concerned by the growth of traffic in small arms and light weapons at the global level and the indiscriminate use of such weapons. These represent violations of rules established in the Programme of Action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons.

We call for transparency and reduction in military spending. My country's Government has, in various international forums, been calling for a reduction in defence spending by our States in order to invest in human capital — in education, housing, health, employment, protection of the environment and justice, because the failings that most of our countries face in these sectors are internal causes of conflicts which degenerate into international controversies. My country's Government put forward a proposal to the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, and has been doing so in other multilateral forums, to create an international humanitarian fund to alleviate poverty throughout the world.

We support the efforts being made by the international community to remove and eradicate anti-personnel mines, in accordance with the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. I am pleased to announce that my country has complied with article 7 of the Convention by submitting to the Disarmament Secretariat the duly completed questionnaire containing the information required under that important legal instrument. We are also contributing military personnel to remove mines in sister countries in one of our subregions, Central America.

In the Andean subregion, my country participated in the meeting of Foreign and Defence Ministers of the Andean Community, held in Lima, Peru, in July this year. The meeting agreed on measures to promote subregional and Latin American peace, designed to ensure confidence-building.

To conclude, my country categorically condemned the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and condemns world terrorism and its causes. This is a very complex subject with diverse modalities. We believe that condemning terrorism must be accompanied by action to combat poverty, inequalities and injustices. It is the poor and the excluded who suffer most from this practice which knows no frontiers and leads to insecurity and the destabilization of world peace. Our objective must be to work for a safer more peaceful and prosperous world for all humanity.

The Chairman: I now call on the representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Mr. Paclisanu (International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)): Since the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly we have witnessed important and positive developments in the context of two international humanitarian law treaties governing weapons. These developments illustrate the potential for making significant progress in addressing issues related to weapons when the focus is rightly put on the human implications of the weapons concerned, and on the fundamental and widely accepted norms of international humanitarian law.

The Second Review Conference of the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), in December 2001, took the landmark decision to extend the scope of all the Convention's Protocols to apply also to non-international armed conflicts. That was a crucial affirmation of the international community's determination to ensure that fundamental rules prohibiting or governing the use of specific conventional weapons apply in the types of conflicts that are the most prevalent today. The extension of the Convention's scope sent a signal to both States and armed groups that the norms contained in the Convention must be respected in all armed conflicts. It will, incidentally, also make the ICRC's promotion efforts much easier.

States Parties to the CCW also agreed to begin formal efforts to address the global problem of explosive remnants of war and anti-vehicle mines in the framework of a group of governmental experts. In the course of the past two years the ICRC has drawn attention to the widespread and dramatic human

consequences of explosive remnants of war, which litter post-conflict landscapes throughout the world. In contexts as diverse as Poland and Laos, uncleared, unexploded ordnance have caused many thousands of casualties and require tens of thousands of millions of dollars to clear. As weapons systems capable of delivering huge quantities of explosive devices over great distances proliferate, so too will the human, social and financial costs, unless, that is, urgent action is taken.

The expert group's work has been encouraging so far. There appears to be a broad consensus that many problems relating to this issue are largely preventable and should be addressed in the CCW context. Many elements for a possible solution have been identified. Among many, these include obligations to clear, or assist in the clearance of unexploded ordnance and the provision of essential information to warn populations and facilitate safe and rapid clearance. However, it is unlikely that significant further progress will be made until specific proposals are considered within a negotiated framework.

Taken in the context of the adoption of the new Protocols in 1995 and 1996, the recent extension of scope, and the decision to begin work on explosive remnants of war and anti-vehicle mines, the CCW Convention has demonstrated its potential to be a dynamic instrument. It has been able to meet challenges arising from new weapons, changing environments, and the changing nature of warfare. The ICRC urges all CCW States Parties to accede, at the earliest possible date, to the extended scope of the CCW Convention and to any protocol to which they are not yet a party. Our institution also urges all non-parties to adhere to the Convention and join in efforts to address in this forum the global problem of explosive remnants of war. The ICRC considers that future work on explosive remnants of war should be carried out within a mandate for negotiation of a new legally binding protocol, and calls on all States Parties to support such a process at the special meeting of States Parties in December.

Last September's fourth meeting of States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction was another important landmark in efforts to end the scourge of these weapons. That meeting provided evidence of the effectiveness of the Convention in reducing the numbers of mines and in mobilizing States, international agencies and non-governmental organizations, towards the goal of the total elimination of anti-personnel mines, along with their horrific effects.

The adherence this year of seven more States, including Afghanistan and Angola, which are among those most ravaged by mines, demonstrates the continuing momentum towards the universalization of this Convention. It also reflected an important shift towards the achievement of specific objectives within fixed deadlines. As a matter of fact, for many States the deadlines for stockpile destruction are coming as early as 2003, and for mine clearance, 2009. The crucial role of the 2004 Review Conference to ensure that these deadlines are met and adequate resources are mobilized was recognized and preparation began. The ICRC looks forward to hosting in November a meeting in Moscow of States of the Commonwealth of Independent States to consider together the challenges and the promise of this important Convention. We call upon all States not yet parties to adhere as a matter of urgency.

The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), by prohibiting the production, stockpiling and transfer of biological weapons, provides an indispensable complement to the absolute prohibition of the use of such weapons contained in the 1925 Geneva Protocol. The ICRC, therefore, deeply regrets that lengthy negotiations to strengthen the Convention through a compliance-monitoring regime, were not concluded as expected in November 2001. We urge States Parties to spare no effort to ensure that the resumed Fifth Review Conference in November takes steps to ensure that the norms contained in the 1925 Protocol and in the 1972 Convention, are maintained and strengthened in the face of rapid scientific developments.

The ICRC is also concerned that the biotechnology revolution, which has already begun, could inadvertently facilitate the use of biological weapons. That has led the institution to issue a rare appeal to Governments, the scientific community and industry on biotechnology weapons and humanity.

The ICRC recognizes that potential benefits of advances in biological sciences and technologies are impressive. However, the potential for deviance is also profoundly disturbing. Existing biological agents have the potential to cause disease among large numbers of

people and to spread fear within populations. New agents and means to deliver them would make the use of biological weapons more dangerous, more difficult to detect, and therefore more attractive.

The capacity of science to manipulate existing bacteria, to create a virus from information on the Internet, and to make genetic material available by mail order, has recently been demonstrated. Unless adequately controlled, the hostile use of such scientific developments could undermine ancient and modern prohibitions of the use of poison as a method of warfare, with incalculable results. In the face of such risks for humanity, the ICRC appeal calls on Governments, the scientific community and the biotechnology industry to work together to ensure that biotechnology will never be put to hostile uses. The appeal proposes actions within the capacity of each of these groups to ensure that current international humanitarian law norms are reaffirmed and strengthened and that effective controls are placed on potentially dangerous knowledge and agents. It also calls on officials in science and industry to understand and assume their moral and legal responsibilities to prevent misuse. Specific proposed measures include the adoption of laws to ensure that acts prohibited by the 1925 Geneva Protocol and the Biological Weapons Convention are prosecuted; codes of conduct for scientists, medical professionals and industry; and improved international capacities to detect and respond to outbreaks of infectious disease.

Finally, the ICRC has urged States to adopt a declaration at a high political level on biological weapons and humanity, containing a renewed commitment to existing norms and specific commitments.

Last, but certainly not least, the ICRC continues to be preoccupied by the ease with which military-style arms are available in many regions of the world. Last year's Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects helped to draw attention to the enormous cost of the unregulated availability of such weapons. It was also important that the Conference acknowledged that this trade "undermines respect for international humanitarian law, impedes the provision of humanitarian assistance to victims of armed conflict and fuels crime and terrorism". (*A/CONF.192/15*)

The implementation of measures agreed upon is now of paramount importance. We urge States to review their laws and policies governing the transfer and availability of arms and ammunition, with a view to preventing access to arms to those who are likely to violate international humanitarian law. We also encourage continued efforts at national and regional levels to supplement the measures in the Programme of Action and look forward to a careful review of its implementation at the first biennial review meeting next July.

Mr. Moungara-Moussotsi (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): Like previous speakers, I should like to take this opportunity to convey to you, Sir, the sincere congratulations of my delegation on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee at the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. I should also like to congratulate the other officers of the Committee. I also congratulate and thank the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Dhanapala, for his statement made at the beginning of our session, which was full of important information. My delegation endorses the important statement made last week by the Ambassador of our sister Republic of Congo, His Excellency, Mr. Basile Ikouebe, on the action undertaken by the subregion of Central Africa in the realm of peace and security, dealing inter alia with confidence-building measures. Hence the importance for Africa of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa and the need to provide sufficient resources for the activities of the Centre.

Pursuant to the Millennium Declaration, the leaders of the world have undertaken to apply the treaties concluded in realms such as arms control and disarmament. Our leaders, furthermore, in the area of international peace and security, supported the idea of convening an international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers.

Two years after the successful conclusion of the Review Conference, and in spite of the Millennium Summit vision on disarmament we are still very far from having achieved the goal of substantial disarmament. The deadlock, indeed the paralysis, in multilateral diplomacy on disarmament has given rise to serious doubts as to the prospects for a weapon-free era, and in particular, one free from weapons of mass destruction. Evidence for this is that the United Nations Disarmament Commission did not meet this year and

the Conference on Disarmament did not succeed in adopting a programme of work.

It is disturbing also to note that, in spite of public statements and declarations of intent by the nuclear Powers to strive for general and complete disarmament, military expenditures continue to climb steeply. This contradiction, unfortunately, eloquently reflects the lack of enthusiasm and zeal by those possessing weapons of mass destruction to get rid of their vast stockpiles which, in any case, are no longer justified by the current political-strategic situation. We must faithfully apply the juridical instruments concluded in disarmament, particularly the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which remains the pillar of the disarmament process. Similarly, we call for more countries to join the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which was opened for signature on 24 September 1996. Furthermore, we appeal for the adoption by nuclear States of moratoriums on nuclear tests, moratoriums that should last until the entry into force of the CTBT.

Gabon, for its part, ratified this Treaty in September 2000 and has on its territory a seismological monitoring station as an auxiliary of the international system of the CTBT and will continue to cooperate with the Preparatory Commission for the CTBT Organization, with a view to establishing a world regime governing verification of the Treaty.

The dastardly attacks on American territory on 11 September 2001 by terrorist cells recalls the urgent need for unanimous action against the dangers of the proliferation of all weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons. At the same time, we must strengthen and improve the physical security of nuclear materials and bring about the destruction of stockpiles of biological and chemical weapons to prevent these materials from falling into the hands of desperados and outlaws willing to stop at nothing in order to achieve their sinister aims.

We do recognize, however, that some good things have happened in the general disarmament process. I should like to mention in this connection the conclusion in recent years of treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones, including the Treaty of Pelindaba for the region of Africa, and we invite all States of our continent to join it. The most recent nuclear-weapon-free zone is that declared in Central Asia, and we welcome it.

We also welcome the decision of Cuba to join the NPT and the signing or ratification of the CTBT by eight additional countries. The increase to 120 participants in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms also deserves mention.

With regard to small arms, the application of the actions contained in the Programme of Action adopted by the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects in July 2001 should remain a priority. We note with satisfaction that the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs is actively at work to establish an advisory service on small arms in order to help States to implement the Programme of Action. The countries of the Central African subregion, for their part, anticipated the 2001 Conference by deciding, following a subregional conference on small arms held in 1999 in N'djamena, Chad, on measures, including the creation of a standardized register of arms nationally and subregionally, and a data bank for existing stockpiles by country, by arms merchants and by transport agents; and the coordination of legislation of Central African States to combat the proliferation of small arms. The N'djamena conference also recommended the creation of a subregional office of Interpol in Central Africa. My delegation believes that combating the proliferation of small arms also requires consistent support for programmes on the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of former combatants. That is why we stress the need for financial and material assistance in this area to countries emerging from conflict in order to help them to consolidate peace in terms of security.

In conclusion, Gabon calls on the international community, particularly the nuclear Powers, to maintain the multilateral nature of the disarmament process. We must consider as an imperative necessity for international security, the task of maintaining the authority of the juridical system of disarmament and promoting the process of arms control and disarmament. As a universal political organization, the United Nations must maintain its leadership role in this area. We would also like to stress the need to conclude and strengthen international norms and instruments to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. With this in mind, an additional effort must be made to revitalize and reinvigorate multilateral diplomacy in the realm of disarmament.

The relationship between disarmament and development on the one hand and disarmament and the environment on the other, should be neither downplayed nor disregarded. At the end of our work here in a few weeks, we shall be voting on draft resolutions on almost the entire range of items on our agenda. Let us exhibit at that time our commitment to make real progress along the course laid down for us by the leaders of the world at the Millennium Summit. How can there be any credibility attached to any of our commitments if those relating to peace and security are the ones being disregarded. We also feel that the establishment, maintenance and strengthening of inter-State relations, and even national relations, based on respect and mutual tolerance, justice and equitable distribution of the fruits of expansion, are all solid guarantees of peace and security. If we are mindful of these values, it will help to ensure confidence and dispel the misunderstanding and hostility that underlie the arms race.

The Chairman: That concludes the list of speakers for this evening, but I now call on the representative of Iraq who wishes to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Al-Matoq (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have been compelled to speak in response to the statement made by the representative of Australia and the false accusations contained in it against my country. I should like to place some facts before you, Sir, and the Committee.

First, Iraq has not contravened international norms or instruments. Iraq is committed to all international disarmament treaties and to the resolutions of the United Nations and the Security Council. The fact that the United Nations inspectors left Iraq was not by a decision from Iraq, nor by a resolution of the Security Council or the Secretary-General of the United Nations. It was a unilateral decision made by the Australian Richard Butler, the Chairman of the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM). The decision was made in coordination with the United States and Britain in order to prepare for the attack against Iraq in December 1998.

Secondly, Iraq voluntarily and without a resolution from the Security Council, declared its unconditional acceptance of the return of the United Nations inspectors to Iraq, in order to prove to the world that there are no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Iraq negotiated with the United Nations in Vienna to put in place the final arrangements for the return of the inspectors to Iraq. However, the Americans oppose the return of the inspectors. They have also opposed the agreement reached with the United Nations in Vienna.

Thirdly, Iraq is not the one threatening international peace and security. Those that threaten international peace and security are the countries that are preparing for a war against Iraq and against the peoples and countries that oppose their aggressive policies. Why is the Zionist entity not branded as a threat to international peace and security in the Middle East? Israel's daily attacks on Arab States and the Palestinian people, and its possession of all types of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons — do these not represent a threat to international peace and security? Is this not taking place with the support of its American allies?

Fourthly, it is indeed strange that some countries should make statements as if they were totally unaware of what was happening in the world around them now. They are like ostriches; they just bury their heads in the sand so as not to hear or see anything. How could it be that those countries do not know that Iraq has been attacked on a daily basis for more than an entire decade. Those acts of aggression are being committed by the United States and Britain, who daily destroy civilian installations, kill innocent civilians and destroy the economic and industrial infrastructure of Iraq, without any of those States uttering a word. Instead, we hear those who are in alliance with the Americans saying that Iraq is a threat to international peace and security. Can the victim be the accused? Can the aggressor be the innocent party, in the perspective of those countries, which falsely claims to be democratic and a defender of human rights? I address this next question to the representative of Australia. Does he have any evidence or proof to put before the Committee of the manner in which Iraq threatens international peace and security? Were the Australian naval forces not present in the Gulf besieging Iraq and monitoring everything that was going into and out of Iraq?

Finally, I apologize for speaking at such length but the international community must hear the truth about the conspiracy that is being hatched against my country and the plans to carry out an act of aggression against my country, with the participation of some parties, without any legitimate right to do so, and without any international law that would justify that.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.